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WAR FOOD ADMINISTRATION  
Office of Distribution  
Washington 25, D. C.

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BACKGROUND STATEMENT ON SHIPPING CONTAINER SITUATION

On July 1, 1944, the amended WPB Order L-232, restricting the percentage of certain fruits and vegetables that may be shipped in new wooden containers, becomes effective. Several postponements in the dead line have been granted since a previous amendment on October 25, 1943, but June 30 has now been set as the last date on which unrestricted use of wooden containers will be allowed.

Growers of those fruits and vegetables that become restricted July 1 are being urged by the War Food Administration to:

1. Take into consideration, when planning acreage, that they have a quota of new containers (in case they do their own packing) or a sufficient quantity of used containers to take care of their expected production.
2. Check with the commercial packers who handle their products to see if those packers have sufficient quotas of new or old containers to meet grower requirements.

Packers are being requested to plan their plantings and commitments to growers so as to adapt them to the provisions of this amendment.

Why the Shortages. — Since 1941 there has been a decline in lumber production and a sharp increase in the rate of consumption. The largest rise in consumption has been for container and shipping uses — boxing, crating, and dunnage. In 1941, the estimated over-all production of lumber was 36,540,000,000 board feet, of which 5,500,000,000 went for shipping purposes. In 1942, total production amounted to 36,300,000,000 board feet, but the quantity for boxing, crating, and dunnage jumped to 9,546,000,000 board feet. The 1943 estimated lumber production figure is 34,630,000,000 board feet, and of this 16,500,000,000 board feet was required for crating and dunnage. First quarter lumber stocks for 1944, approximately 7,000,000,000 board feet, are contrasted with much more than twice that amount for the first quarter of 1943. The 1944 figure may be considered generally an irreducible working minimum and on certain species and grades there is no inventory cushion. Favorable weather in the Pacific Northwest helped production during the first quarter of 1944, but in the South, weather conditions were generally unfavorable.

Commodities whose packing and shipping in wooden containers are restricted, and the quotas allowed on the basis of the 1942 calendar year, are:

MAY 27 1944

	<u>Percent</u>
Cantaloups and melons . . . . .	80
Carrots . . . . .	100
Cauliflower . . . . .	80
Celery . . . . .	80
Cucumbers . . . . .	50
Grapes, juice . . . . .	50
Grapes, table	
a. Thompson . . . . .	100
b. Muscat . . . . .	100
c. Sultana . . . . .	100
d. Zante Currant . . . . .	100
e. All other varieties . . . . .	110
Lettuce . . . . .	80
Radishes . . . . .	50

Fruit and Vegetable Crop Prospects. -- Production of both fruits and vegetables in 1943 was below that of 1942. Consequently, container requirements for these commodities were relatively low in 1943, but even so, the supply of wooden containers from all sources, new and used, was barely adequate.

This year, a larger crop of vegetables is expected than was produced in 1943. The Bureau of Agricultural Economics estimates that early vegetable production will be about 16 percent above the comparable production of 1943 and 25 percent above the 10-year average for these crops. If these expected increases in production of both fruits and vegetables in 1944 are obtained, considerable more packages will be needed than were needed in 1943. These extra requirements have been estimated to be a million half-bushel baskets, approximately 17 million bushel baskets, 2-1/2 million bushel hampers, 17 million lug and deciduous fruit boxes, and around 7 million vegetable crates.

Prospective Container Supply. -- As indicated by a recent survey of hamper and roundstave basket manufacturers, the chief limiting factors in production of wooden shipping containers have been (1) inadequate labor in the factories, (2) scarcity of logs, and (3) low ceiling prices. By geographical sections, east of the Rocky Mountains, the estimated 1944 production by these firms as compared to 1943 is as follows:

<u>Round State Baskets</u>			<u>Hampers</u>	
		<u>Percent</u>		<u>Percent</u>
Northeast	Decrease	10	Decrease	25
Southeast	Increase	10	Decrease	25
Midwest	Decrease	20	- - - - -	-
Southwest	Decrease	10	Decrease	10



Probable Carry-Over. Reports on the probable carry-over of new baskets, hampers, and boxes from last year's short crops are necessarily incomplete and inconclusive but they range from 10 to 25 percent of requirements in New England, the four Appalachian States, South Carolina and Georgia, the most pessimistic outlook being in the Middle West and New York where the carry-over is practically negligible. In only one or two instances (Maryland and South Carolina) does it appear that actual delivery in appreciable quantities has been made on confirmed orders.

Goals for Salvaged Containers. — A schedule of suggested goals for the use of secondhand packages by areas, for various types of fruits and vegetables, is being prepared by the War Food Administration. Its purpose is to focus the attention of the entire container industry on the need for the maximum re-use of packages and thus encourage their accumulation. The schedules are being referred to various industry committees for comments and from these suggestions it is hoped to establish fair and attainable goals for the various regions which will result in increased re-use of containers.

Special Rates for Used Containers. — Special freight rates are already in effect for the shipment of secondhand fruit and vegetable containers from all the Northern, Central, and Western States, east of the Rocky Mountains to the South. These reduced rates are also available on traffic within the South. In addition, there are special rates from eastern shipping points into Pacific coast producing districts. These lower costs for returning secondhand packages will make possible the shipment of a greater volume of fruits and vegetables, as well as other perishable products.

Publicity Angles. — The greatest need in publicizing the shipping container situation is to impress upon the public the seriousness of the situation, as based upon the preceding body of facts. Commodities such as those fruits and vegetables included on the restricted list, must be moved to market as rapidly as possible.

Growers are doing an all-out job to meet 1944 farm goals, but their produce is of little use if containers are not available to move them from grower to consumer. Avoidable food waste cannot be allowed, especially in wartime. Such waste can be avoided if secondhand containers are salvaged and returned to packers and shippers.

Timing. — The Containers Division of the War Production Board and WFA is at present sponsoring a Container Re-Use Program. All agencies are asked to cooperate fully. Educational and informational materials must, of course, be angled to the groups that can "do something about it" — growers, shippers, packers, wholesale distributors, chain stores, retailers, institutions, and to some extent, consumers.

